

## OVERVIEW OF THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION

This document has been prepared to help persons aspiring to become certified court interpreters understand what the written test measures, how it is administered, and how to prepare for taking the exam. Each examinee should study this overview thoroughly in order to be more fully prepared for the written exam.

The written examination is only one part of the process for becoming a certified or approved court interpreter. Passing this test does not mean a person has become a “certified court interpreter;” rather, it means the examinee has met one of several requirements for certification.

The written test measures candidates’ knowledge of three areas central to the work of a court interpreter at the level of a minimally qualified court interpreter:

**1. English Language.** To function as a professional court interpreter, one indispensable component is a high degree of proficiency in the English language. Accordingly, the written examination assumes a high degree of literacy in the English language and familiarity with a range of language constructions. It tests comprehension of written English vocabulary and idioms.

**2. Court-Related Terms and Usage.** A second area of knowledge essential to successful professional performance is familiarity with the terminology and procedures of the court system. Accordingly, the written examination also measures recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary, especially in the area of criminal courts.

**3. Ethics and Professional Conduct.** The third area of knowledge required of professional court interpreters encompassed in the written test is general knowledge of standards guiding the performance of duties. Accordingly, the written exam includes questions aimed at measuring candidates’ knowledge of ethical behavior and professional conduct.

## PREPARING FOR THE TEST

If you are not familiar with taking written, multiple-choice tests, you may find it beneficial to:

1. Review instructions and suggestions on taking multiple-choice tests such as:
  - a. “Information about the Written Examination,” Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination ([http://www.ncsconline.org/d\\_research/Consort-interp/fcice\\_exam/FCICE-ExamineeHandbookOnline.pdf](http://www.ncsconline.org/d_research/Consort-interp/fcice_exam/FCICE-ExamineeHandbookOnline.pdf)) on page 12.
2. Study preparation material developed for similar exams, or even take the exams
  - a. TOEFL: TOEFL Sample Test, 6th Edition ([www.ets.org/toefl.html](http://www.ets.org/toefl.html)). There are many other publications available as well.

**With respect to Part I, General Language Proficiency, one needs to have a very broad command of the English language. That is not something that is quickly or easily acquired. However, some of the following activities might be helpful in expanding one’s knowledge of the English language and preparing for the test:**

1. Take upper-level English courses at a college or university.
2. Read widely such items as books and professional journals in many fields, American literature, and editorials and articles in major newspapers.
3. Brush up on English vocabulary and lexical concepts (go back to the basics and review antonyms, synonyms, and idioms).
4. Review sample tests from other interpreter certification programs:
  - a. California: Request a “practice written examination.” See <http://www.prometric.com/California/CACourtInt.htm>
  - b. Administrative Office of the United States Courts: For a description of the written portion of the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (FCICE), go to ([http://www.ncsconline.org/d\\_research/Consort-interp/fcice\\_exam/FCICE-ExamineeHandbookOnline.pdf](http://www.ncsconline.org/d_research/Consort-interp/fcice_exam/FCICE-ExamineeHandbookOnline.pdf)). A sample test can be found in the Examinee Handbook.
5. Consult other resources, such as:
  - a. The Idiom Connection, available online at: [www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/6720](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/6720).

- b. The ESL Idiom Page, (Dennis Oliver), available online at: [www.eslcafe.com/idioms](http://www.eslcafe.com/idioms).
- c. The Synonyms Page, available online at:  
[www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/synonyms.htm](http://www.manatee.k12.fl.us/sites/elementary/palmasola/synonyms.htm)
- d. SAT and GRE workbooks.
- e. Vocabulary-building books found in the reference section of libraries and bookstores.

**With respect to Part II, Court-Related Terms & Usage, and Ethics & Professional Conduct, the following activities would be helpful in expanding or acquiring the substantive knowledge pertinent to these fields:**

#### Court-Related Terms & Usage

1. Read news items related to legal matters, law enforcement, and the courts in major newspapers, consulting a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words.
2. Visit courthouses and observe court proceedings in civil, criminal, and family matters.
3. Take college/university courses in criminal justice and court administration.
4. Read any standard introductory textbook on the criminal justice system.
5. Read publications about the administration of justice such as the following documents issued by the American Bar Association ([www.abanet.org/abastore](http://www.abanet.org/abastore)), which are available for \$2.50 each:
  - a. Law & the Courts, Volume I, The Role of the Courts, 2000.
  - b. Law & the Courts, Volume II, Court Procedures, 1998.
  - c. Law & the Courts, Volume III, Juries, 2001.
6. Study legal terms from the following sources:
  - a. Black's Law Dictionary
  - b. Glossary of Commonly Used Court & Justice System Terminology (a publication of the Consortium that is available at [http://www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res\\_CtInte\\_EnglishLegalGlossaryPub.pdf](http://www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res_CtInte_EnglishLegalGlossaryPub.pdf)).

## **Ethics & Professional Conduct**

1. Become familiar your state's Code of Professional Responsibility [or Conduct] for Court Interpreters and its Rules of Court pertaining to court interpreting, if any.
2. Study the model code of professional responsibility, which is available at [http://www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res\\_CtInte\\_ModelGuideChapter9Pub.pdf](http://www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res_CtInte_ModelGuideChapter9Pub.pdf)
3. Join and participate actively in a professional association such as the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators ([www.najit.org](http://www.najit.org)) or the American Translators Association ([www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)), studying their respective codes of ethics.
4. Read at least one of the classic texts in the field:
  - a. Berk-Seligson, Susan (1990). *The Bilingual Courtroom: Court Interpreters in the Judicial Process*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
  - b. De Jongh, E.M. (1992). *An Introduction to Court Interpreting: Theory and Practice*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
  - c. Edwards, Alicia B. (1995). *The Practice of Court Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
  - d. Gonzalez, R.D., Vasquez, V.F., and Mikkelson, H. (1991). *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press.
  - e. Hewitt, William E. (1995). *Court Interpretation: Model Guides for Policy and Practice in the State Courts*. Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts (available online [see #2 above for web address]).
  - f. Mikkelson, H. (2000). *Introduction to Court Interpreting*. Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing.

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<sup>1</sup> The above information is from the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification. The complete document can be found at [http://www.ncsconline.org/D\\_Research/CIResources.html](http://www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/CIResources.html)